must have got to loathe those rattling ovens, the desert battle-wagons!

None of us felt like walking the ten miles to Ral-al-Khaimah. We decided to invite the Khan Sahib to give us his advice. He at least knew the locality; but to our surprise he had disappeared. We assumed he had designs of his own, and waited patiently in the shade of an old palm tree until he should return. On our left the creek flowed lazily as the tide came in, while to our right lay open fields of clover, divided by plantations of thriving date palms, each about a quarter of an acre in extent, and surrounded by flint-and-mortar walls three feet high. The trees are carefully tended from the first planting, and the plantations contain as many as twenty to thirty deep-wells each, from which the water is hand-drawn by means of buckets attached to long ropes.

On some plantations there is a simple, but effective, irrigation system; this consists of channels running at right angles, like the lines on a crossword puzzle. The young plants are placed in the ground between these channels, and are surrounded by low mud walls. This enables the water to collect around the roots in a saucer-shaped depression. The roots penetrate the soil for five or six feet in their search for water, and trees in their prime (about twenty years old) reach a height of thirty feet or more. The bark is composed of the stem-base of the leaves or fronds, which die off each summer. The fruit begins to form in July and the dates are ready for picking in September. They are then packed tightly in boxes and taken by camel or dhow to the merchants for export. Those intended for local consumption are either dried, or else pickled in their own syrup, to which is sometimes added wild honey and ginger, making a delicious concoction.

Herds of cattle were grazing in the fields, watched by young Arab boys; they sang ditties to each other or told stories, a favourite desert pastime. The cattle are very small and anæmic compared with European stock, the largest bull being no larger than a young English heifer. Like the Indian cattle, from which no doubt they are descended, they are hump-backed and have a pathetic *moo-oo* which resembles the cry of a nursery toy cow. The Arab farmers tie the forefeet of their cattle together to prevent them from straying, and their progress when being driven reminded me of a two-legged race.

We had brought a .303 service rifle with us. It had originally belonged to one of our Askhari guards, but he had not looked after

[* Ten miles from Ras-al-Khaimah -- Analyst]

transport; there is no flat desert, as at Sharjah, suitable for an air-000
field, and the mountain ranges are too close for safe flying.

In parenthesis, I learnt that shortly after the Sheikh of Sharjah 622
had agreed to lease his land to the British for the purposes of an 683
airfield, he was secretly murdered by a hired assassin, who crept into his palace while he slept, put his eyes out with a red-hot iron, and slit his throat. The present ruler of Sharjah, Sultan bin Saqr, never sleeps without an armed bodyguard outside his room, and it is whispered that he is waiting to avenge the murder of his father. He has little doubt who instigated the crime.

An old retainer of the Khan Sahib's, a wrinkled Arab with a 302
henna-dyed beard, Ali bin Achmed, came to talk to us. He is 517
employed as a seaman and looks after the petrol dhow on which the emergency stocks provided by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company are stored. He is a distinguished-looking old man, with a fund of stories which he related to us as the sun sank slowly behind the sandhills and the palm trees leant in ragged silhouette against the sapphire-tinted horizon.

The Khan Sahib closed the shutters, lighted a perfumed coil of 354
anti-mosquito powder, and hung a kerosene lamp from a hook 264
in the ceiling. A slave brought us dishes of rice, steamed lamb, curry balls, chipatties, *haloua*, fruit and turkish delight, and, feeling ravenous, we ate in silence, seated on Persian rugs with our legs tucked underneath us in Arab style.

After the third cup of clove-scented coffee, we sat in the dim [272]
light, smoking cigarettes, while Ali bin Achmed puffed away at 517
his tiny pipeful of hashish. He told us wild stories of shipwrecks on the rocks, and of pirates who plundered the unfortunate vessels and held the passengers to ransom; of British gunboats which shelled the village in reprisal and clapped the headmen in gaol. Then he spoke of the wild men of the mountains, the Shi'hou 186
tribe, who seldom left their dark caves in the hills, and who lived on 563
fish, wild honey and dates. They never mixed with the lowland Arabs, were greatly feared on account of their wild appearance and cruel habits, and were believed to be in league with a djinn.

'There is gold and tin in the mountains,' said Ali, 'but men will not seek for it on account of these wild ones. A man would be rich who dared to climb those cruel slopes and search for the gleaming metal. But, praise be to Allah, it would be a foolhardy enterprise.'

The Shi'hou tribe is a very ancient one, according to Ali, and

[Sharjah bazaar]

products of Bombay and Birmingham—gaily-hued sarongs, shirts and scarfs—vie with cloths of native weave, and woollen cloaks washed, spun and woven in Dubai. Most of the drapers have a little haberdashery section, comprising pins, scissors, reels of cotton, tape and ribbons, in a glass case.

Foreign visitors usually find most delight in the carpet shops, where rugs from Ispahan, Sheraz, Kerman and Bushire lie in neat piles on the wooden floor; rugs of exquisite dyes and patterns may be obtained by those who are willing to pay the high prices demanded to-day—sometimes a hundred per cent higher than they were before the war. Really old and valuable carpets are rare and can usually be obtained only in Persia or India. There is, of course, the inevitable fake; a modern carpet designed in the seventeenth century style, which has lain in the streets of Teheran until the feet of goats, donkeys, camels and humans have worn it into the 'antique' texture.

A good modern carpet, of delightful colour, design, weave and nap, measuring about eight feet long by five feet wide, can be bought for sixty or a hundred rupees, according to the quality. For the poor man, there are machine-made rugs and carpets of traditional design, made in India, which cost from twenty rupees upwards. It is always advisable, however, to seek the advice of an expert when buying carpets in Arabia.

The 'mixed' general shop is usually worth a visit, for here one may find the wristlet watch or fountain pen which one lost in mysterious circumstances. Watches of good Swiss or American make are on sale at reasonable prices; my own 'Novoris', which came from Sharjah, cost only four pounds. Fountain pens, sunglasses, rings and brooches, adorn the shelves side by side with Muscat daggers, canned goods and foreign cigarettes. Between every half-dozen booths is squeezed a café or coffee-shop, where the Arabs laze away the afternoon to discuss business or the affairs of the town. Nearly all business deals are talked over in the dark corners of a coffee-shop, where a wheezy portable gramophone screeches interminably the latest Arab love-songs, most of them discreetly pornographic.

I liked best to stand outside the bakers' booths and watch them make bread or rice-cakes. The dough would be kneaded and pummelled into shape in a bowl-shaped depression on a stone slab. When judged to be of the right consistency, it would be placed on a long-handled ladle, the blade of which is latticed like

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

533 complaint is not confined to the B.B.C. I have heard similar
265 songs in China and Oklahoma, and assume that unrequited love is a global ailment.

At a sign from Hassan, the old record-player began to play some tangos which took me back to the late twenties, and the audience began to smile broadly and drummed on the tables with
265 their fingers in response to the rhythm. Most of the café habitués
● 517 were business men and shopkeepers, who assembled there daily
521 to discuss stocks and prices. Two of them came to sit by us and the conversation, directed by the learned Hassan, turned to religion, or rather the differences of the Mohammedan and Christian versions. The similarity between certain passages of the Koran and those of the Bible were seized upon, and a bearded patriarch confessed with a twinkle in his eyes that the Prophet had been well-informed in the gospel of Christ and, as all knew who had read both holy books, had derived not a little inspiration from the parables.

771 The essential differences of the two religions lay in their conception of morality; thus some Christian concepts of human behaviourism, such as the negation of violence and vengeance, are diametrically opposed to the tenets of Islam. The Koran has a great deal of beauty, however, and its teaching of brotherly love and its philosophy of man's essential one-ness in the sight of God, alone have given it a deserved immortality. A really good Mohammedan is, in some ways, better than a good Christian; he will certainly die for his religion, if needs be, and his concept of life is far less material than that of the confirmed church-goer.

000 Hassan mentioned several Englishmen who have been converted to Islam, among them the late Lord Headley, President of the British Muslim Society, and the patriarch told us, to our great surprise, that he had made a journey to London some years ago and visited the mosque at Woking. He had a very great admiration for Lord Headley, a Haji who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and whom he regarded as sincere and devout.

The sun was sinking below the house-tops, gilding the streets with a golden haze, so after shaking hands with the merchants and making our salaams, we rose and departed back to the Fort.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

Seated around our camp fire that night, Hamid burst into a long and rather plaintive song about our journey, of which I give a literal translation: 533 539 517.

'Weary the traveller who leaves his home,
Saddened by comforts he has left behind;
Only the fool will brave the burning sun,
Searching for ghostly cities of the mind.

'Allah protect us from the djinns and fiends,
Spirits of evil who infest the dunes;
Let us return with haste to those we love,
And woo them with brave tales and manly tunes.'

We laughed loudly at this nostalgic chant, and the singer, eyeing us balefully for a moment, got up and retired to his tent. We had changed into Arab dress,* which is more comfortable in the desert than shorts and bush shirts, and there was little to distinguish either Schultz or myself from our companions. The scorching sun had burnt our faces a deep copper-brown, with white circles around our eyes, where they had been protected by sun-glasses. While Suliman prepared the evening meal, and Khofan bin Salim recited a long narrative poem which he had heard in Muscat—an Homeric tale of wifely infidelity—I read a chapter of the Koran.

Khofan was babbling on:

'Salaman heard—the Sea of his Soul was moved,
And bubbled up with jewels, and he said:
Oh Shah, I am the slave of Thy Desire,
Dust of the Throne ascending Foot am I.'

*The Arab cloak, or outer garment, is known as an *abbas*, and is usually of coarse linen, white, black or brown, sometimes edged with gold braid. The head-dress is composed of a square of fine muslin or Kashmir wool, and is worn under the black-braided *aggal*. In the Trucial Oman Coast this head-dress is known as a *ghatrah*, but in the Nejd and other parts of Arabia it is also called a *kufieyh*. It is worn by folding the *ghatrah* into a triangle, the base of which is placed across the forehead, the cloth being kept in place by the *aggal*. The ends of the *ghatrah* offer protection against insects, dust and the rays of the sun, and during a sand-storm are sometimes drawn across the mouth to form a veil. 291